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Class of 1984 Five Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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RESPONSES FROM THE MEMBERS OF
THE CLASS OF 1984
TO THE LAST QUESTION ON SURVEY ASKING FOR
"COMMENTS OF ANY SORT ABOUT YOUR LIFE
OR LAW SCHOOL OR WHATEVER"

* * * * *

U-M Law School, like life on remote northern islands, magnifies negative character traits and teaches toughness as a habit. Unfortunately, the toughness is not rooted to a real necessity and so many graduates make difficulty and unpleasantness a way of life to absorb the learned toughness. Although the school made my career, I pass by it each time with a sense of lost opportunity. A great many gifted individuals go there, and I believe fewer gifted individuals graduate from there.

I am exceedingly proud of Michigan Law School and of the fact that I have a degree from Michigan. In addition to providing an excellent legal education, it was, generally, a very enjoyable place to be for 3 years. Perhaps because it is a top law school, there was less of a feeling of "competitiveness" among students, so we could relax more and have a good time. The generally mellow and highly civilized nature of life in Ann Arbor must also factor in to this equation, however, because I have many colleagues from other top law schools who did not enjoy their 3-year experience in law school nearly as much as I and most of my friends from Michigan did. With that said, I still encountered two disappointments at Michigan. Coming from a small, highly select midwestern liberal arts college, I had expected that law school would be a continuation of "the great debates on the big issues," at least to some extent. I found instead that, by and large, the emphasis was on case discussion and analysis. Rarely did we step back and ask whether the fundamental rules and principles themselves made sense, were fair, etc., or whether there were better alternatives. (As one example, in my Welfare Law class, we spent 2 days debating Rawles, Nozick and other competing theories, or how we should perceive a "welfare state," etc., and then proceeded to spend the rest of the semester immersed in regs.) Second, the faculty-student interaction was (again, with some exceptions) a huge letdown. I understand that professors at a major school are under tremendous pressure to publish, etc., and that this leaves less time to devote to teaching and developing a true rapport with students. Nevertheless, I found the faculty a little too inaccessible and disinterested in their students.

In no way does law school prepare the average person, especially one with no business background, for life at least as a corporate lawyer in private practice. Law school was too long -- there was absolutely no need for 3 years of school. The appropriate training for at least corporate law would be more like a 6 months-1 year clinical course -- practice in drafting contracts

with discussion on meanings of provisions, types of deals etc.; practice in negotiations and ethical rules related thereto; field "research" like visiting a "client's" widget factory to understand how client's needs (financing, liability, trade secrets, etc.) relate to what lawyer does for him (UCC law, confidentiality, agreements, etc.). For those who know they want to do corporate law, 3 years of law school was really a waste (at least it was for me) -- by the time I got into practice, I'd forgotten what I'd learned 2 years before and not only that, but because I knew so little about business during law school, my course-work didn't really mean that much to me in the first place.

Law school in a way needs these days to be essentially practical -- tips on the politics of law firms, collating, stapling, lunching with partners and clients, etc.

Thank you for doing this survey -- I've been wanting to say the foregoing for years and also to know how the women in my class are doing.

While I enjoyed law school, I have not enjoyed the practice of law. This is in a large part due to (i) the amount of hours required by law firms today, (ii) dealing with difficult people (i.e., attorneys) all day long both in and out of the office, (iii) the volume of work, (iv) the repetitiveness of many aspects of the practice. I truly believe, from talking with friends in the profession and those in business, that lawyers, of all professionals, are the most dissatisfied.

On a different topic, I do not believe that law school adequately prepared me for the practice of law. Too much time is spent on theory and the Socratic method of reading cases -- 3 years is too much time devoted to developing the skills to be gained from these practices -- especially considered that those of us who end up practicing in business areas spend very little time analyzing case law or trying to make subtle differentiations in fact patterns, but rather spend most of our time drafting documents and preparing for closings. To my knowledge not a single class at law school was devoted towards drafting -- it should be a required course. Also in both the real estate and corporate areas, closing a deal and "papering the deal" should be simulated by the students and the operative documents should be broken down and examined paragraph by paragraph to discover their importance and the history and reason behind these paragraphs.

As between high school, college and law school, law school was unquestionably the most unpleasant experience both intellectually and socially.

It was a crime that Michael Rosenzweig was denied tenure. I felt he was the best professor I had at Michigan. I realize that it was largely out of the law faculty's hands, and that the fiasco was mostly the responsibility of Harold Shapiro and Billy Frye

(both of whom are thankfully gone from the University) (and possibly due to Dean Sandalow, too), but it was very damaging for the School (not to mention personally for him). Hopefully recruiting of professors has not been hurt too much by the incident.

Beyond that, I have learned over the past few years that Michigan is a much more pleasant place to go to law school than most places, and I have the fondest of memories. I am very thankful that I went there.

I am troubled by the small number of my classmates who viewed law as a helping profession. I hope this is changing among the current law student body.

As I enter my thirties, I find that non-professional interests -- family, home, recreation and relaxation -- are becoming much more important. I am finding it difficult to achieve a balance between my career in litigation and my personal life. Work is definitely not enough if life is to be satisfying. I am more and more convinced that I can not "do it all" -- at least not all at the same time. Career may take a back seat to family and community involvement, at least for a period of time.

Although I don't practice law, I work exclusively in employee benefits which I feel is an increasingly important and growing area of law. My firm, Mercer Meidinger Hansen is looking for attorneys who specialize in employee benefits. I'm sure the other employee benefit firms do the same. I'm currently pursuing at LL.M. in taxation. I think that the more tax classes that can be offered at the U of M Law School, the better (especially those relating to employee benefits).

I feel in interviewing after law school I was discriminated against on the basis of age.

I generally enjoyed my law school experience, but I felt that most of my classmates, including myself, had trouble keeping things in perspective. The stress seemed to affect everybody's ability to be patient, tolerant, and/or considerate of others. Now that we've been practicing awhile, I think we are much more relaxed, "normal," and likable people.

I am thrilled you are doing the survey because I am very curious how my law school peers feel about their experiences. I look forward to the results. Thank you for your efforts.

Although I appreciated the intellectual challenge of the Law School, I felt very much alienated. Without question, the administration set a racist tone for the Law School which, like a cancer, spread throughout the classrooms, poisoning otherwise brilliant and creative minds. Missing an "A" by 1 point in three classes during the first year caused me to become very suspicious. Facing the humility of raising my hand, only to be

passed over day in and day out certainly did little to alter my opinion. Law school alone was sufficiently challenging; I certainly did not need the added weight of having to educate professors, deans, and students alike, that persons of color are equal in all respects.

As a female senior associate looking towards partnership in two more years I am extremely concerned and discouraged by the conflict between motherhood and private practice. I have a daughter aged 17 months and would like to have another child soon. While the partners (male) that I work with in a branch office were supportive of my choice to have a child, they are not supportive of the requisite reduction in billable hours. I cannot and will not work 14 hours a day every day anymore. Fortunately, the partners are willing to compromise on the hours, but they will not make a commitment on the impact of 3/4 time employment (i.e., 8 am-5pm) on partnership. Partnership at this firm is based on the "smell" test after seven years. This is not very encouraging -- especially when public sector and in-house jobs are begging for over-stressed senior associates who desire to work and live as a normal person.

The point of the comment is basically that prior to becoming a mother I did not understand the difficulty of the role I'm in. I wouldn't have really understood if I had been told. This is a very important issue facing all attorneys -- male as well -- with no simple solution in this egocentric billable hour world.

I believe other question/inquiry areas would prove to be interesting, such as:

- If you had to do it all over again, would you do anything differently about how you handled law school?
 - _____more or less time studying
 - _____more extra-curricular
 - _____more specialization
 - _____different classes, etc.
- Effect of "golden handcuffs" (i.e., salary) on decision to stay in present job.
- If you weren't in present job, do you think you'd be in non-legal or non-law firm job; what type?

Overall, I feel I was very ill-prepared to practice law in the "real world" upon completing my education at the Univ. of Michigan Law School.

Frankly, I found law school to be a brutalizing and humiliating experience. I left with the firm conviction that the Law School was more interested in acclimating its students to the rigors of the aristocracy than in helping them with useful skills. I still feel this way, with some modifications.

U of M clearly has a different agenda than, say, the University of Wyoming, whose law school my boss attended in the late 1960's. Even so, a comparison between my experience in law school and his is instructive.

My boss was taught real-world skills in law school, by teachers who were themselves attorneys and who knew their way around a courtroom. Every day I envy him that experience. I suspect that sooner or later I'll pick up those skills myself, from practice and from watching him. It's also true that my skills in abstract legal thought probably exceed his, as a result of my education at U of M, but then I've always been the analytical sort of person. All the same, his intensive education in real-world lawyering more than compensates for any deficiencies in his education.

My memories of U of M are not pleasant ones. I remember some bully professors who were selected and retained more (it seemed) for their prestige value than for their teaching skills. Yale Kamisar stands out in this respect. I never was able to figure out which was more disturbing: an esteemed expert in criminal procedure throwing a useless distracting tantrum, or 100 of us taking it personally. Maybe there was a lesson there after all. At any rate, I remember feeling swamped, exhausted, and over-worked in ways that seem even now to bear very little relationship to the professed goals of a legal education.

The only part of law school I remember with any affection or real appreciation was my experience with Ellen Tickner in the Child Advocacy Clinic. She was first-rate, and the clinic was a wonderful experience and a real education, in itself nearly worth the tedium, dread, and stupidity of the third year.

Upon reading the above notes, my wife thinks I've overlooked the ways in which I developed my analytical abilities in law school. She says that I benefitted a lot from my contacts with professors (relationships which I remember working on), and that I emerged from law school much more sophisticated than I had been at the start. This is true. I question why this development had to come at such cost to my sense of well-being.

One recommendation: I was fortunate to obtain a clerkship with a federal district judge (two of them, in fact, one after the other, with different judges), despite having graduated in the middle of my class grade-wise. This only occurred because the first judge I worked for paid little attention to grades. In my experience, he was unusual in that respect. I would encourage the Law School to do what it can to help make the clerkship experience available to a wider spectrum of students than just those at or near the top of the grade heap. A federal clerkship is a wonderful experience. Unfortunately, as things stand now, it seems generally to be one that is enjoyed only by those characters who put their feet up on the library tables outside the Law Review offices and carry on in loud voices.

Your survey is well-designed, and I appreciated having the opportunity to sound off.

Law school at Michigan was a fine intellectual experience, but,

beyond the first year, did little to prepare me for the actual practice of law. I was older when I started law school and had to go heavily into debt to get there (as well as working part-time throughout school). Perhaps that perspective makes me more critical than most about what I got for my money. I believe law school could easily be reduced to 2 years. An understanding of the basic first year courses is a must, but I think now that the seminars and more esoteric courses I took in my 2nd and 3rd years were worthless. I also think a great deal of time was wasted playing out the Socratic method to its fullest. If I were teaching, I would try to teach the underlying theory through practical, real-world problems that lawyers confront when they actually practice law (since that's what the majority of Michigan grads do).

Although I went to law school because I couldn't think of anything else to do, and no longer practice law, I've never regretted my U of M Law School experience.

I discovered that a good issue-spotter does not necessarily a good lawyer make because no one wants to pay you to make sure all those issues, which you think are 90% irrelevant, are indeed irrelevant.

To paraphrase Lennon: 'Life is what happens while you're busy billing hours.'

Just say no (to golden handcuffs). Thank you.

I don't think the FBI or the Armed Forces should be banned from recruiting at Michigan. Until this and similar politics change I will probably not support U of M Law School financially.

I'm very happy with the balance I've struck between my family and my career. I love my wife and child and am very jealous of my time with them. They come first, not my job. My firm seems to accept this, and I have every indication I'll make partner on this basis.

I felt that law school did not prepare me well for practicing law. Most professors were much too theoretical -- that's fine for those few class members who may themselves teach or practice before the Supreme Court. Most of us need to know the practicalities, and are expected to know at least basic practice when we begin our jobs. I knew very little black letter law before taking a bar review course -- that's a sad commentary on three intense years out of my life. Much more is needed in the way of practical application.

Students are leaving law school never having seen a contract, let alone having considered the impact of particular clauses or the need for clarification of other provisions. Students have never seen interrogatories or real estate sales agreements or mortgages. They've never entered a courtroom (except perhaps the

moot court room) or a register of deeds office or a jail. It's frightening that after three years at a law school considered to be one of the finest, students are not prepared to perform even the most basic tasks. Please add more clinical law and practical classes -- or require coverage of application in the present classes.

I believe I received one of the finest legal educations available at U of M and I appreciate it. In comparison to my peers and even lawyers who are more senior, it is clear my training at U of M was superb.

It is unfortunate that I must practice law, and that practice is so unpleasant. Lawyers I have worked with are self-centered, egotistical and hyper-critical. They make extreme and unreasonable demands without regard to one's interests, needs or health. There is a lack of appreciation for a job well done.

The training to be a lawyer should be accompanied by some training in interpersonal skills and personnel management. A law firm's greatest asset is its people. It seems firms would do better to nurture that asset.

I find that law school, in particular the subject matters taught and the way in which they are taught, has no similarity to the actual practice of law. While I was not a particularly successful law student, I have become a very successful lawyer, and I have watched people who did very well at Michigan founder as practicing lawyers. One of my major criticisms of the Michigan approach to legal education is its negligible attention to writing skills. I was fortunate enough to have well-developed writing abilities before I reached law school, but many others appeared to be sorely lacking in this area. I think that the legal writing program should receive much greater emphasis than it did when I was at Michigan (it must be taught by professors or practising lawyers rather than other students) and that students must be expected to construct complete, grammatical and organized responses to exam questions in their regular courses (many of the so-called "A+" exams I read on file at the library wouldn't have been given a passing grade by a high school English teacher!)

I also believe that the administration at Michigan is too indulgent of the obnoxious, over-achieving students who really are only a small percentage of the Michigan Law School student body. These people created the overly-competitive environment in the Law School, but then tried to find every available avenue to "beat the competition," usually by appealing to Dean Eklund about the unfairness of it all. There is no Dean Eklund in the real world of practicing law and I think that these people should be forced to face that fact early on in their law school career.

Despite these two complaints, and the fact that I did not find law school fulfilling on an intellectual level, I have fond memories of my years at Michigan. I made many good friends who

are still important parts of my life today and, on the whole, my classmates were people who I know are making a contribution to the community. I also must say that I have found having a Michigan J.D. gives me added credibility as an attorney and has aided my career advancement.

I felt at the time and continue to believe that Michigan provided a relatively relaxed and healthy environment for its law students. The people I know who went to Michigan (over a wide range of years) generally seem to have genuinely enjoyed the experience -- unlike the people I know who went to many other law schools. So you must be doing something right! Mere speculation on my part, but I think that the emphasis the school puts on alternative (non-firm) careers and the diversity of the student body contributes significantly to this positive experience. The absence of a Wall Street focus also probably helps, even though many of us do end up working for Wall Street firms. And of course, there is no substitute for the wonderful professors I had the pleasure to be taught by.

I went to law school in substantial part because it would be intellectually interesting -- at Michigan this was true in spades. I am fiercely proud of the place, but (as I'm sure all do) wish I had taken better advantage of it. I am concerned that the School stifles its students' appetite for risk and willingness to try unusual approaches.

Rather too much emphasis on the legal journals as an index of achievement (and I participated on one). The School should be creative in encouraging other types of activity -- and reward them.

Law school was too heavy on the esoteric and too light on the practical reality. I was naive about the realities of life as a lawyer -- the billable hours, the stress, the egos, the money-grubbing and game playing. I didn't see much justice going on out there. After trying 4 different types of law firms and 3 different types of law practice, I bailed out. I'm now a real estate appraiser. The work is not terribly exciting, but the atmosphere is much more relaxed and creative, and I've actually met people I like! I cannot picture myself practicing law, ever again. I am, however, still interested in legal issues and court decisions, from an intellectual standpoint, just as I was prior to law school. I'm enjoying life a lot more since leaving law practice, though...sad, isn't it?

A few things I would be curious to know about other alumni:

- 1) How many have experienced discrimination because of sexual orientation? I've been fortunate to be able to practice in a large private firm that takes a fairly open minded approach to its gay lawyers. I suspect this is not typical.
- 2) How many lawyers would choose the same career path if they could do it again? How many would counsel a friend to enter law school now? I would not, in both cases. I don't see the

practice of law changing for the better, either. Too much concern about money -- not making a sufficient amount to live comfortably but making enough to buy that Porsche 911 or that summer house.

I felt the Law School was very supportive of women who were married and had children during law school. Dean Sue was a God-send. Need more people like her in the Law School. Good balance.

I do feel the Law School professors in many instances do not give very much attention to Black students, probably inadvertently but still insensitive. I believe Black students feel isolated to a large degree and left out of the "system." The personal relationships, mentoring, support and encouragement is not given to Black students in the same manner as whites. I believe the professors should actively reach out to Black students to help foster a better feeling among Blacks and the professors that Blacks are needed and making a contribution to the Law School and professors.

I feel a class on coping with stress in the workplace would be extremely helpful. Everybody both at the Law School and at work is just too intense. The Law School fosters such intensity without balance. This is the mentality you take to the workplace. Stress = ethics problems.

I feel that a class geared toward professional married couples on dealing with how to allocate time and lifestyle between work and home, how not to let work interfere with a good sound family relationship (prioritizing time), how to deal with stress in such a setting. The Law School and legal profession environment seems to foster a work first, family last mentality. Probably due to the intensity, but with little regard to stressing balance in family, social, charitable.

I understand that Michigan Law School is moving to do more to foster public-interest careers for its students. I think that that is the area in which the Law School was most deficient during my time there. Financial help for non-wealthy students who want to practice public-interest law is essential, but so is career counseling for those who do not want to pursue clerkships or law firm jobs. An area which I did not learn anything about was non-litigation public-interest law work. I would like to see the Law School do more in that area as well.

The survey design reflects particular interest in professional/personal life issues, especially the way women balance their roles and discrimination against women in the workplace. The survey also asks one question directed at racial discrimination. Unfortunately, though the issues of gender roles and gender and racial discrimination are appropriate topics for research, not even America's highest academic institutions yet question the pervasive prejudice in the profession based on

gender preference. Similarly, lawyers with handicaps, including those suffering with AIDS, face discrimination to varying degrees. It is extremely disheartening that the Law School's concerns about discrimination remain so narrowly focused. I would ask Dean Bollinger to take a stroll through the basement hallway to remind himself of whose bulletin boards get defaced. Perhaps that physical evidence will remind Dean Bollinger and the survey designers that little has been done to integrate gays into the legal system.

My years at Michigan were among the best of my life in all respects--academically and socially.

The only criticism I have probably applies equally to most other law schools: too much emphasis on the traditional abstract case method and not enough practical, clinical learning. (At the time, I didn't fully appreciate what I was missing, in hindsight this fact is much clearer.)

While my practice is solely corporate finance and merger and acquisitions, I do not believe that should or can adequately train an attorney practicing in such areas. For example, while in law school, I took Corporate Finance (Rosenzweig & Bradley) and got very little out of it, not because it was a poorly organized course but rather because I did not have a sufficient practical background in order to take advantage of the course. I would get so much more out of that course now after having worked on the mechanical aspects of the kinds of deals discussed in a theoretical sense in the course.

I don't believe that lawyers in firms with sophisticated practices expect or want new attorneys with a vocational training; it doesn't matter to me if a young attorney knows the difference between a Form S-1 and Form S-4 when he starts practicing -- those things can be easily taught. What is important is that the young attorney has the analytical and organizational skills that an excellent law school training provides. Consequently, while there may be more and more pressure from law students for courses with practical application (I felt the same way in law school), resist these pressures for the most part. The corporate lawyer of tomorrow benefits so much more from an intellectually stimulating discussion on the First Amendment than a course which explains the various securities filings. Vocational training (a.k.a clinical law) has its place, even at an excellent law school, but it should not be permitted to dominate.

Your questionnaire is a good, useful idea. I believe it is a bit too long.

I understood that having law school loans and college loans made private practice almost inevitable. Now that the loans are paid off, it is time to move to a better social and work environment. Many persons in my class have found that they cannot resist the

urge to be a partner, and they sell out their original goals. I haven't, but the temptation is there as a warning to all -- the money isn't worth the sacrifice of your life.

1. The tremendous imbalance between lawyers willing to represent the poor and the average person and those willing to represent high paying corporations and individuals is even clearer to me now than in law school. As a public interest environmental advocate I am generally one against tens or even hundreds of corporate lawyers. I have also personally seen many people with strong cases as toxic victims who are unable to sue because their total damages are not immense enough to attract personal injury lawyers.

For the sake of these unrepresented individuals, and for the sake of the planet that sustains our lives, the U of M Law School and other law schools must do more to produce public interest lawyers.

2. I rated my overall law school experience so low in question 6 partly because many of my professors were not good teachers. They were indeed brilliant, but lacked basic organizational and communication skills.

I practiced for five years, working both in-house and at a large multinational firm. My work in acquisitions led me into the area of strategic planning. Finding strategic planning to be more stimulating than the law, I decided to leave the law behind. I am currently in my first year at the Wharton School where I am studying for an M.B.A. in Finance and Strategic Planning. School has been very exciting and I was surprised to find that there were several other lawyers in my class.

The Socratic method is a poor method for teaching legal principles and problem solving. It is a good method for exploring the boundaries of basic principles. Law School courses taught by the Socratic method typically failed to distinguish what it was good for and what it was not good for.

Exams were a good test of legal skill, though they put a premium on quickness. The problem was that the Socratic method was not a good preparation for taking exams.

Advise law students of their different options besides the corporate practice. Advise about the very real differences in the types of attorneys most likely to succeed in the different areas. An ERISA attorney must be a very careful worker. A criminal lawyer needn't be so meticulous but must be creative and aggressive. He can afford to be more flamboyant, etc. Different personalities will enjoy and prosper in one area of law and fail in another. Law students don't know that.

I miss Yale Kamisar for his passion, brilliance, decency and sense of humor.

I miss Sue Eklund for her kindness and warmth.
I miss Nancy Krieger for her warmth and sense of humor.
I miss the energy and fun of law school classes, though not the tedious classes and the oft-time boring reading.
I'm glad that Sandalow is no longer the Dean.
I regret that Marie Deveney was not teaching when I was a student. I think she should be granted tenure forthwith.

Practicing law is sometimes fun but generally tedious, dull, socially destructive and/or irrelevant, an endless waste of time and energy, and peopled by unhappy human beings who either never had a social conscience or, like me, sold theirs for a mess of porridge.

A questionnaire with boxes and circles and a finite set of answers is most fitting for our "noble profession" -- it allows us to get the job done quickly without the bother of reflection.

Sorry this is so short (in every sense of the word) -- it's 10 pm on Sunday eve and I have to get back to my tasks.

I think that the Socratic method as practiced at the Law School is a poor method of teaching, particularly after the first year. I also think that three years is too long when one learns very little of practical application while attending law school.

As for practice, it's probably better than a lot of other jobs, but I have a hard time seeing myself doing this for the next 30 years. The money's good but the job is neither interesting nor fulfilling.

I can't believe after nineteen years of school and \$22,000 plus in debts that my work is so rote, mundane, unimportant, unchallenging and of little use to a world that needs so many other things done. I feel trapped and betrayed.

You caught me on a bad day. It's Friday afternoon; I've worked four twelve-hour days in a row on a complicated deal that is very risky for my client; and at the negotiating table on the day of closing, when the other side attempted to change the deal yet again and I asked my client privately for clarification of the new proposal, my client then went back to the table and informed everyone that I didn't understand the deal and needed to have a picture drawn for me. I felt belittled (nothing new with this particular client), and my credibility was effectively undermined. Although I objectively know that I am not stupid (it took the other side's tax attorney, a man with twice my legal experience, four attempts to correctly capture the essence of the revised transaction), emotionally it's hard to brush off. Fortunately, I have good friends who are supportive and help me maintain a sense of humor and perspective; without them, I'd be out of here. I have not yet said anything to my client about my perception of what happened, but I will if I can think of a productive way to do it. I think part of the problem is my

client's lack of respect for lawyers in general (we're parasites, you know; a necessary evil) and part of the problem is his lack of respect for professional women. Anyway, my answers to these questions (particularly #17) might have been different on a different day.

I didn't expect to discover that law firms have distinctive "personalities." These can have adverse influences on the habits and personalities of firm employees. I was told that law school is a socialization process. I would agree, but would stress that so is joining a law firm.

I didn't expect to discover how often tax questions surface for clients.

You left out a section on question 11b -- the most adverse or discriminatory treatment I have received has been in court, where an advocate must find a way to diffuse the situation without risking an adverse impact on the client's case. It's usually possible to insist (with or without tact and humor) that clients or other attorneys behave appropriately. But it is much tougher when a judge behaves badly (especially in front of a jury). I believe that programs currently underway will go far in eliminating these occasional problems.

My greatest problem with the practice of law is that in order to "get ahead" in either private practice, or increasingly in a corporate environment, a lawyer must subordinate his or her entire personal life to the demands of the job. It is a continuing conflict to balance the demands of the job against those of a home life. For example, I work in a firm entirely composed of men except myself. They do not understand that I have many more responsibilities at home than they do -- such as making dinner most weeknights -- and I can't stay at work til all hours unless it's urgent. All of the men I work with have nonworking wives, so they can devote themselves to their work. I am pregnant with our first child and plan on quitting to raise him or her (and future children), since I have no desire to attempt to balance work, home, and childrearing and make the existing situation even more difficult. I think it's becoming increasingly clear to most women that they can't have it all -- unless the profession changes its attitudes and its career tract.

The more I practice law, the more ethereal the University of Michigan Law School approach and faculty appears.

1. Please assist new lawyers with the payment of school loans during the first 3 yrs so that their credit rating is not destroyed for non-payment.
2. Assist minority lawyers who graduate from Michigan to find employment that gives them an equal opportunity to succeed with large firms or corporations. Michigan is a superior law school and graduation should entitle you to an opportunity to use the skills learned. If the people at Michigan are treated as

secondary persons, in favor of the top 1/3 of another lesser law school, then Michigan loses its edge and appeal in placement of its graduates.

If it had been financially possible to do so, I really would have liked to join a public service legal group for a year or two after law school. Unfortunately, the massive student loan debt and uncertainty of other elements prevented me from doing so. I would like to see the Law School support more programs that would assist students (similar to Student Funded Fellowships) who wanted to spend a year or two in non-corporate law after school. Skadden, Arps founded one such program, and perhaps other law firms might do the same. The Law School itself might also be in position to assist with loan payments during such a program. Quite apart from the lure of a \$70,000+ starting salary, though, I remain increasingly concerned that the "low budget" options for Michigan grads are being gradually eliminated -- even for those willing to make the financial sacrifice to do so.

My greatest disappointment about my career so far is that, for the first time in my life, I have felt discriminated against. It happened when I put my cards on the table, i.e., had a baby. Since then I've felt my male mentors have written me off, even though I work harder and am more "together" at work than I was before the baby. I guess I was lucky to have gotten this far before I felt disadvantaged as a woman, but it still hurts.

I'd like to go back for a semester of law school and take classes I didn't know I'd care about (e.g., criminal procedure). I'd also be able to concentrate harder than I was able to when I was in school -- family problems overwhelmed me at times back then. I think life really does improve with age -- or maybe it was that the 20's were a trough in a generally uphill climb.

There is no question that having graduated from the University of Michigan Law School gives me initial credibility with other lawyers in the community who learn where I went to law school. Beyond that, one has to prove oneself on one's own merits, and I'm convinced that U of M has given me superior instruction in how to analyze a legal problem. In some ways I think I analyze legal matters more "academically" than most other practitioners.

I am also firmly convinced that the University of Michigan Law School, when rated on the full range of factors relevant to a quality legal education and the quality of a law student's life, ranks at the top of American law schools.

The structure of most large law firms (i.e., partners and associates) makes little sense today. In most firms, there are partners who, under today's standards, would not make partner. The up and out policies combined with the increasing perception that you must be a "star" to be a partner causes a lot of worry for associates who make great salaries now but may be out of a job (with no comparable prospects) in five years.

The political facts of life at large law firms are that whether you make partner depends more upon who you work for and how they are perceived than it does on your own merits. I think the high salaries hurt us in the long run as it forces firms to create more leverage by making less partners. The lack of appealing job opportunities outside large firms scares me.

Since I was five years old I had wanted to be a doctor. I decided to become a lawyer after getting a B- in my first college chemistry class. I became a Pre-Med drop out. Social Sciences were extremely easy for me. I found law school intellectually stimulating but, even as a law clerk, I had a growing realization that I did not want to practice law. I practiced law at a large corporation for two years after law school. The work was boring, routine and my enthusiasm plummeted. When I expressed my dissatisfaction, one director stated, "You can learn something from every job; even if only how to tolerate a bad job."

I still wanted to be a physician. I quit and returned to school, completing all pre-medical requirements in 2 semesters. I matriculated to Medical School in the fall of 1988. I have been extraordinarily pleased with my decision. My legal training continues to be worthwhile but it is no longer the focus of my career goals.

I am strongly considering a complete career/field change, and am in the process of deciding on the area of interest in which to head. I don't want to be a partner in a law firm.

I have been surprised by precisely how little the substantive law I learned in law school really matters in the actual practice. It has nothing to do with the criteria for making partner. This is probably in part due to the fact that trial courts generally are not too interested in a lawyer's legal mind and that pragmatic practical considerations tend to drive deals.

Although the remuneration and community prestige received in the legal profession are fairly high, I sometimes feel that this is a horrible way to make a living. The stress and ever increasing demands endemic in practicing make it difficult to wind-down, even on weekends. I do not know whether I can push myself like this for 30 more years, and do not know that I want to try.

Law school was not a pleasant experience. The cut-throat one-upmanship in the Picozzi era of U of M Law School was NOT my idea of good competitive spirit. The only way I survived was to make frequent trips out-of-state. I am glad, however, to have attended a national law school, particularly, because of the unique socialization to which I was exposed.

I feel in interviewing after law school I was discriminated against on the basis of age.

Thank-you, Michigan, for good friends, an unusually generous and non-competitive atmosphere, for fellow students who shared outlines, for providing an outlet like Dean Sue when things got too tough, and for a great education with a minimum amount of pain. Thank-you!

While I enjoy being a lawyer, I most definitely did not enjoy law school, which was surprising to me because I expected to enjoy it as much as I enjoyed college. I found law school and most law students to be too wrapped up in only those events which took place within the confines of the Quadrangle. I used to think this was peculiarly a Michigan problem but have learned it seems to be just typical law school. Everyone seemed to thrive on being in a fish bowl environment and I felt like the odd fish out. Maybe it was because I was not doing as well academically as I would have liked but I found other people's need to know their standing relative to all others in the school extremely depressing.

Because of the work I do (Legal aid--civil) I still feel relatively isolated from the other alumni of my year. At the few alumni gatherings I've attended, the impression I've gotten is one of my not relating terribly well to the concerns/ discussion topics of the others present. I realize that the problem may rest with me and not the system or maybe I have not given the alumni a reasonable number of chances but I am still left with the impression of not fitting in and not sharing the seemingly common bond of Michigan Law School alumni.

This is not to say I went through law school in a never ending depression. I made some very good friends there and value highly those relationships. I am also proud to have a Michigan Law School diploma on my wall. I enjoy the work I do and feel as if I am doing some good in the world. I work for a Legal Aid organization that specializes in people over age 60. Given the demographics of society, it appears that this will be an area of growth for the foreseeable future and it is exciting to be in on the ground floor of such an area. But it is also an area where you so far have to blaze your own trails which is also scary. You have to have the resources (financial and otherwise) and abilities to create your own job or to wait for positions to be created for you. Nonetheless it is an area of law I am good at and in which I wish to remain.

I would recommend (i) a question asking about sexual orientation, (ii) question asking about related discrimination, and (iii) making this questionnaire anonymous (i.e., removing identifying numbers).

I am not a woman or racial minority, but experience considerable difficulties as a gay man in a large firm practice.

Life is good right now. I have made choices -- marriage and bearing children -- that have pushed my career to a lower rung on

my "priority ladder," and I'm happy with that....While my government job lacks the glamour and high salary of private practice, I seldom work more than 40 hours per week, and I never work weekends. I have time for my family and myself and that's what's important to me. Would I do the "law school thing" if I could do this over again? Probably not. I have other interests and talents, and I believe I will leave my mark on this world in some other "non-law" way!

Law school should be reduced to two years, or the third year be entirely clinical study.

Law school was a devastating experience for me. It hurt my finances, my career path, and my marriage greatly. I got off on the wrong foot healthwise, and I got off on the wrong foot socially (being married and living off campus didn't help). There were other people greatly harmed at Michigan Law School, and I could name some. I'm still oddly loyal to the place, and I took some positives away, but I came away battered. I worked for over a year at Yale Law School, and I observed important differences between the two schools. Yale was a more tolerant, liberal, warm, close, supportive environment. Some of this was due to the size difference, but not as much as U. of M. administrators would like to believe. I was taken in by the students, and practically in residence there for that year, and what a difference! I love U. of M. in a sick, hurting way like I love my ex-wife, and I would like to see changes in it. There was a time when I had a lot of ideas; maybe I could still remember some of them. I have wanted to speak to someone of power and vision there about what I have perceived, but I cannot believe anyone is really interested. Don't publish my name, but if anyone ever wanted to speak to me on my thoughts (scheduling something in summer would be best), I would make it happen. I believe strongly in improving the world around me, and in other people benefitting from my own hard lessons.

I'm glad to see this survey. Maybe you folks really are interested in helping your future enrollees.

Clinical law course--Child Advocacy: extremely rewarding and helpful in making law school to lawyering transition.

Life is change.

I graduated at the top of my class in college. At Michigan, I graduated at the bottom of the class. College prepared me for the business world. Law school did not prepare me for the practice of law. My judicial clerkship prepared me for the practice of law. In college, I did not feel that being a minority was of any consequence. At Michigan, I felt my minority status had a bearing on my grades. As a highly regarded associate, neither my grades nor my ethnic origin have affected my performance in the practice of law.

I'll always value my education from Michigan, but somehow, I feel that I may have missed the point -- somewhere.

(1) Courses I wish I had taken, but didn't: commercial transactions, antitrust, conflict of laws.

(2) If I had it to do over, I would not go straight from undergrad to law school.

I enjoy law practice much more than I enjoyed law school.

I will take the opportunity afforded here to share with you a few thoughts about the Law School and the fashion in which it prepares its graduates for the personal and professional challenges they will encounter. Although I likely underestimated its importance at the time, my training at the Law School seems to have provided me with a sufficient foundation from which to appreciate the need for preparation and intellectual rigor if one is to have a successful and enjoyable practice. Given the commendable record of achievement by its graduates, I suspect the Law School, and in particular the faculty and administration, needs no further expression of gratitude by me to be satisfied that its essential mission, training its students to "think" in a structured and careful fashion, is executed in an exceptional fashion.

However, there are a couple of areas in which the Law School seems to be deficient. In discussing with my peers their general level of satisfaction, both professionally and personally, and speaking from my own experience, these two come to mind. First, I think that the Law School must find new ways in which to emphasize the importance of interpersonal communication skills beyond formal spoken and written forms. Legal writing and public speaking skills are, of course, essential. However, the practice of law in its application is very much a "people" business. No lawyer, no matter how well educated, can be effective in a broad sense absent a well developed ability to understand his or her particular audience and communicate at a level that is understandable to that audience. By necessity, this will often take place at a rather personal level, where interpersonal skills will be as, or perhaps more, important than precision and formality. This is often the case both in negotiation or contact with one's "adversary" as well as with one's client, and my experience suggests that the need for interpersonal skills transcends the various areas in which lawyers practice. Put simply, a terribly bright and articulate lawyer may be ineffective if she (or he) cannot convince the people with whom she is dealing to listen and relate to what she is saying (or writing). While the various students who make up the Law School student body will vary greatly as to the development of their interpersonal skills when they arrive at the Law School, the importance of such skills should not be underestimated, and I believe that a seminar or course offering an opportunity to focus on these skills should be a requirement. The course "Lawyer as Negotiator" (at least that's what it used to be called) is a good

start, but might better be labeled "Lawyer as Communicator" to more aptly address the central issue. Negotiation strategy is of course important to a successful negotiation, but so is achieving an atmosphere in which the other participants to the negotiation, no matter how hostile or despicable, are willing to communicate on a humane and productive level. Needless to say, shortcomings in this area of a professional nature are only magnified in one's personal life.

Which brings me to my second point. Many of my peers are disappointed with their professional lives and, in a significant number of cases, their personal lives as well. On a professional level, a large part of the problem arises, I suspect, due to unrealistic expectations as to what the actual practice of law, in whatever setting, will entail. The problem seems most acute in the large private law firm setting, and I think that more might be done by the Law School to better educate its students with respect to what they might properly expect when they leave the friendly confines of the Quad to join the multi-office megafirm of their choice. This unfortunate intrusion of reality often spills over into one's life outside the firm (what little there may be!), and therein lies the more difficult problem. Expectation adjustment is a relatively simple matter. However, helping students understand the necessity for aggressive strategies by which to balance competing demands as one's time (within and without the office) and the inevitable sense of failure that comes with not being able to "do it all" should be a goal of the overall Law School process. Much has been written on the subject. Formally, or informally, introducing such information to law students would serve two important purposes. First, the able members of the Law School faculty could screen whatever materials are recommended. Second, and perhaps more important, at least some students would come to understand that it's ok to feel overwhelmed at times and have some ideas as to how to deal with such feelings. The life of an associate at a large law firm is stressful at best. Knowing how to manage such stress, or recognizing when it has become unreasonable or unmanageable, is central to surviving with one's emotional state-of-mind intact. The number of my friends who have leveled the same charges with respect to their law school experiences (at Michigan and elsewhere) suggests that the need to address this issue arises well before students depart the relatively tranquil setting of the Law School.

As is the tendency with lawyers, I have doubtless carried on too long. However, I hope these thoughts are helpful.

I think overall U. of M. is one of the best law schools in the U.S. in terms of the quality of its education, but I was surprised at how uneven that education could be. Some of the courses and professors were among the worst I have ever seen in my life in terms of the quality of their teaching, whereas others (fortunately, most) were among the best. I do not believe that elitism is necessarily a good breeding ground for good teaching,

and some of the worst teaching I experienced came from top-of-their-class, Law Review types who probably were thankful they never had any experience in the real world. As is often true in professional schools, legal education can be a bit haphazard--on the whole, the more "nuts and bolts," the better. I think Michigan in this respect is helped by being a state law school and thus escapes some of the pretentiousness of its peers (Yale, Harvard, etc.).

Personal dissatisfaction among lawyers appears to be rampant, at least according to articles I read in the popular and legal press. Perhaps lawyers should sit back and realize that admission to the bar is merely a license to practice a profession, not an anointing to some holy order. Happiness is a function of expectations. If lawyers had more realistic expectations, ex ante, they would have greater happiness ex post.

Law school was very rewarding intellectually. However, that was overshadowed by the pressure for grades brought on by the overpowering influence of job interviews. It affects the courses some students choose, shying away from more challenging subjects for fear of lowering their GPAs. There is also something distasteful about the fact that a person's career is irrevocably limited by the grades he receives in his first year of law school. I would like to see Michigan move to a pass/fail grading system -- at least for the first year -- with an open writing competition for the Law Review.

Good luck and God help us all.
